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ABSTRACT

Predicated on the assumption that if teachers are to have a positive influence on the reading and television viewing habits of their students it is important for them to be aware of their own reading and viewing habits, a study was conducted to determine whether teachers spent more time reading or watching television. Fifty-six teachers in an urban area kept daily records of their reading and television viewing time for one week. They were also asked to record the names of the programs they watched and the tyeps of materials they read. The results showed that the sample as a whole watched television only five minutes a week longer than they spent reading during that same period (9 hours and 39 minutes for reading as opposed to 9 hours and 44 minutes for viewing). The findings also revealed that 19 of the teachers qualified as nonreaders (reading less than one hour a day) and 20 qualified as nonviewers (watching television less than one hour per day). There were no heavy readers or viewers (reading or watching television more than six hours a day). The nature of the materials read and the programs watched by the teachers could not be ascertained from their responses. (FL)

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TIME TEACHERS SPEND READING

VERSUS

TIME THEY SPEND WATCHING TV

by

Mary Vieth

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Arts degree in Education at Kean College of New Jersey

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The relationship between television and reading and the effects of television on children's reading have become very controversial issues, yet little attention has been given to significant other models and their effects on children's reading and viewing habits. If teachers are to have a positive influence on the reading and viewing habits of their students, it is important for teachers to be aware of their own reading and viewing habits. Walter Barbe (1963) states that the first step in developing interest in reading in children is for the teacher to love to read. The teacher who is not interested in reading or who does not find time to read, can hardly be expected to develop an interest in reading on the part of students.

Teachers are very quick to criticize the amount of time their students spend watching television. A general criticism being that they spend too much time watching television and not enough time reading. Nancy Larrick (1980) says that elementary school children watch an average of more than 30 hours a week, with some individuals watching 60 to 70 hours and even 80 to 90 hours. What about the teacher's viewing habits? How much time do teachers spend viewing television daily? Do they, too, spend too much time watching television and not enough time reading? According to David Gauelette (1980) the average American views about 6 hours of television per day and will spend more than 9 years of his life in front of a television set. Nancy Larrick (1980) also comments on

the amount of time adults spend watching television. She says that the average American watches 1,200 hours of television (the equivalent of 150 working days or 30 working weeks) and spends only 5 hours reading a book each year.

Jackson-Beech and Jeff Sobal (1979) classified adult television viewers in three categories according to the number of hours they viewed television each day. The three classifications were viewers, nonviewers and heavy viewers. They also describe the outstanding characteristics of the individuals in each classification. As a whole, they found that heavy viewers seem to be at home or employed as laborers, service workers or equipment operators. A majority of them did not complete high school and are concentrated at the bottom of the social stratification system. Viewers and nonviewers are quite alike in their occupations except that 5% more nonviewers than viewers are involved in professional or technical work. With regard to membership activities nonviewers are about as active as viewers despite the fact that they have more time available to participate. The area of greatest difference between viewers and nonviewers lies in their family structure. Nonviewers are significantly more likely to be never married or married and childless. Nonviewers are a diverse lot, but on the whole they are better educated and about as well integrated and active as average viewers.

Into what classification would teachers fall? Are they

viewers, nonviewers or heavy viewers? Does the amount of time a teacher spends viewing television affect the amount of time spent on reading? These are all important questions if the teacher is to convey to children a love of books. It is essential that the teacher love to read. Walter Barbe (1963) compares reading to an infectious disease, a good one, in which interest is caught from one another and from the teacher.

Eugene H. Cramer and Camille Blanlowicz (1980) point out that it is the belief of most reading teachers that teachers who are avid readers are likely to have a positive influence on the reading habits of their students. And teachers who are themselves reluctant readers are not likely to lead students to a lifelong love of reading. The teacher must assume the role of the model for students reading attitudes. Norine Odlanf and Therese Ilstrip (1963) reported on a survey of the reading habits of prospective elementary teachers and found the results to be optimistic. There were many among the group of prospective elementary teachers who seem to possess an interest in reading and who had developed a power of selection which would guide their reading toward worthwhile literature, but there were also many individuals who read very little. The survey also brought to light another area of concern, that was the choice made in books and magazines of some of the prospective teachers. It was questioned whether some of the prospective teachers in the survey would be capable of guiding children to develop sensitivity and selectivity when, in their

own experience, they seem not to consider the intellectual qualities of material read truly important. A successful teacher must be a worthy reading model for students to emulate. Students cannot be motivated to read if teachers are not motivated. Teachers who do not find the time to read or read material of poor intellectual quality need to evaluate themselves in regard to their own reading and viewing habits if they are to make a difference in the reading and viewing habits of their students.

Hypothesis

Teachers spend more time viewing television than they do reading.

Procedures

A survey was distributed to 300 teachers in the urban area surrounding Kean College of New Jersey to measure the amount of time teachers spend reading versus the amount of time they spend watching television. The participating teachers were requested to keep a daily record for one week of their television viewing time and the amount of time they spent reading. They were also asked to indicate the kind of material they read and what programs they watched.

Definitions, Limitations, Assumptions

Nonviewers - watch less than one hour of TV each day.

Viewers - watch one to six hours of TV each day.

Heavy viewers - watch more than six hours of TV each day.

Nonreaders - read less than one hour each day.

Readers - read one to six hours each day.

Heavy readers - read more than 6 hours each day.

The researcher assumes that the teachers who respond to the reading versus TV survey answered the survey honestly. It is also assumed that the survey is indicative of their present reading and viewing habits. The brief period of time available for this study necessarily limits the reliability of generalizations made from the study.

Results

Of the 300 teachers requested to participate in the study, only 56 or 18.7 percent responded to and submitted the questionnaire for use in the study. The low response, while suggestive, was deemed sufficient to meet the purpose of the study.

Table I illustrates the number of hours a teacher reads versus the number of hours the same teacher watches TV. It also illustrates the total number of hours spent reading and watching TV in one week plus the mean number of hours of the sample.

Table I

Teachers Reading Hours Versus TV Viewing Hours

	Reading		VS.	TV	
1.	10 hrs.	40 min.		8 hrs.	0 min.
2.	11 hrs.	40 min.		11 hrs.	25 min.
3.	11 hrs.	45 min.		6 hrs.	30 min.
4.	6 hrs.	15 min.		15 hrs.	0 min.
5.	5 hrs.	40 min.		0 hrs.	25 min.
6.	1 hr.	45 min.		8 hrs.	30 min.
7.	16 hrs.	30 min.		8 hrs.	30 min.
8.	8 hrs.	45 min.		11 hrs.	0 min.
9.	27 hrs.	30 min.		13 hrs.	30 min.
10.	6 hrs.	45 min.		12 hrs.	0 min.
11.	4 hrs.	0 min.		8 hrs.	30 min.
12.	10 hrs.	50 min.		6 hrs.	30 min.
13.	11 hrs.	20 min.		11 hrs.	0 min.
14.	7 hrs.	45 min.		12 hrs.	30 min.
15.	9 hrs.	0 min.		14 hrs.	15 min.
16.	8 hrs.	55 min.		14 hrs.	0 min.
17.	4 hrs.	30 min.		14 hrs.	0 min.
18.	8 hrs.	30 min.		13 hrs.	30 min.
19.	9 hrs.	30 min.		0 hrs.	0 min.
20.	6 hrs.	50 min.		21 hrs.	0 min.
21.	10 hrs.	0 min.		5 hrs.	30 min.
22.	7 hrs.	50 min.		3 hrs.	45 min.
23.	7 hrs.	55 min.		11 hrs.	30 min.
24.	2 hrs.	0 min.		2 hrs.	45 min.
25.	6 hrs.	0 min.		4 hrs.	0 min.
26.	3 hrs.	25 min.		6 hrs.	5 min.
27.	8 hrs.	30 min.		12 hrs.	50 min.
28.	12 hrs.	0 min.		7 hrs.	45 min.
29.	5 hrs.	30 min.		12 hrs.	0 min.
30.	11 hrs.	45 min.		7 hrs.	45 min.
31.	13 hrs.	0 min.		1 hr.	50 min.
32.	8 hrs.	0 min.		5 hrs.	30 min.
33.	11 hrs.	0 min.		4 hrs.	30 min.
34.	13 hrs.	45 min.		17 hrs.	30 min.
35.	16 hrs.	0 min.		19 hrs.	15 min.
36.	10 hrs.	20 min.		16 hrs.	45 min.
37.	2 hrs.	10 min.		0 hrs.	0 min.
38.	18 hrs.	30 min.		19 hrs.	0 min.
39.	6 hrs.	20 min.		13 hrs.	0 min.
40.	5 hrs.	30 min.		5 hrs.	30 min.
41.	3 hrs.	55 min.		22 hrs.	15 min.
42.	7 hrs.	45 min.		3 hrs.	30 min.

Table I Continued

	Reading		VS. TV	
43.	3 hrs.	30 min.	11 hrs.	0 min.
44.	10 hrs.	30 min.	13 hrs.	0 min.
45.	11 hrs.	20 min.	7 hrs.	45 min.
46.	3 hrs.	15 min.	1 hr.	30 min.
47.	15 hrs.	0 min.	13 hrs.	30 min.
48.	29 hrs.	0 min.	2 hrs.	0 min.
49.	9 hrs.	0 min.	6 hrs.	0 min.
50.	3 hrs.	0 min.	16 hrs.	30 min.
51.	5 hrs.	55 min.	3 hrs.	25 min.
52.	11 hrs.	30 min.	1 hr.	30 min.
53.	11 hrs.	0 min.	17 hrs.	30 min.
54.	9 hrs.	30 min.	12 hrs.	30 min.
55.	19 hrs.	30 min.	18 hrs.	30 min.
56.	19 hrs.	0 min.	8 hrs.	0 min.
Total	540 hrs.	35 min.	545 hrs.	15 min.
Mean	9 hrs.	39 min.	9 hrs.	44 min.

The data indicates that at least one teacher read as much as 29 hours a week while watching TV only 2 hours while another watched television over 22 hours and read less than 4 hours. The data also indicates that the teacher sample as a whole watched television only 5 minutes longer during the same week that they spent reading over 9 and a half hours. As a group the amount of time spent is almost equally divided between reading and watching television.

Table II indicates a comparison of the number of non-readers, readers and heavy readers versus the nonviewers, viewers and heavy viewers.

Table II

Comparison of Types of Readers Versus Types of Viewers

Number of Readers		Number of Viewers	
Nonreaders	19	Nonviewers	20
Readers	37	Viewers	36
Heavy Readers	0	Heavy Viewers	0

The data indicate that the sample is composed mostly of teachers who are by definition readers and viewers. That is, they read on the average more than one hour, but less than six hours each day. Thirty-seven teachers or 66 percent fell into the category of reader. Thirty-six teachers or 64 percent fell into the category of viewers. Nineteen or 34 percent fell into the category of nonreaders and twenty or 36 percent fell into the category of nonviewers. These teachers by definition read on the average of less than one hour each day. The same is true of their viewing habits. There were no heavy viewers who by definition would have had to read or watch television more than six hours each day. Seven teachers were both nonreaders and nonviewers.

Conclusions and Implications

It would appear from this study that teachers spend an almost equal amount of time reading and watching television, thus the hypothesis of the study is not supported by the findings. Some reasons for the hypothesis not being supported may be that a longer period of time was needed to conduct the survey and give a more accurate reading and viewing pattern. Another reason for the findings not being supportive may be due to low responses. Only 18.7 percent responded to the survey.

The data indicated also that the sample is composed of teachers who are viewers and readers by definition. That is, they read or view television from one to six hours each day. Of the remaining teachers 19 or 34 percent were nonreaders and 20 or 34 percent nonviewers. Seven teachers were both nonreaders and nonviewers, but it was not known how they spent their leisure time. As a result of this survey, teachers appear not to be heavy television viewers, but, on the other hand, neither are they heavy readers.

Over nineteen hours of this week was spent reading and viewing television. If this can be borne out by further studies, the results would indicate that teachers spend less time watching television than the average adult, but they also read a great deal more than the average adult who only spends five hours reading a book each year.

Teachers were also asked to indicate the kind of material they read and the programs they watched, but very few did this. Most generalized by stating novel, newspaper, movie, variety show, etc., and many only listed the hours they spent reading or watching television.

Further studies need to be done to determine if teachers read or watch television more frequently. Perhaps more time and a greater response is necessary to validate the findings of this study. A period of one week may not be enough time for collecting data and the percentage of responses might be improved by personally contacting people and requesting them to participate.

RELATED LITERATURE

The relationship between television and reading and the effects of television on reading have become very controversial. Marie Winn (1977) states that it is not enough to compare television watching and reading from the viewpoint of quality. The nature of the two experiences are different and that difference significantly affects the impact of the material taken in. When reading the mind hears words and forms images. The great difference between these "reading images" and the images we take in when viewing television is that the reader creates his own images when reading based on his own life experiences but he must accept what he receives when watching television. Television images do not go through a complex symbolic transformation. The mind does not have to decode and manipulate during the television experience. Perhaps this is the reason why the visual images received directly from a television set appear to be stronger than the images conjured up mentally while reading. Also according to Winn, concentration plays an important role in viewing vs. reading. Because reading demands complex mental manipulation a reader is required to concentrate far more than a television viewer. According to audio experts the electronic media has what they call "openness". "Openness" permits auditory and visual stimuli more direct access to the brain. Someone who is taught to concentrate will fail to perceive many patterns of information conveyed by the electronic stimuli. This predisposition toward "openness" (the opposite of focal concentra-

tion) acquired through years of television viewing, has adversely influenced viewers ability to concentrate, to read and write clearly.

In the television experience a viewer is carried along by the exigencies of a mechanical device, unable to bring into play his most highly developed mental abilities or to fulfill his individual emotional needs. He is entertained while watching television, but his passive participation leaves him unchanged in a human sense. For while television provides diversion, reading allows and supports growth, Winn (1977).

Are the commercial television stations doing anything to encourage reading through the media of television? According to a study done by Sue E. Kinnamon and J. R. Staff (1975), not very much. Their study was to find out what is being done, or has been done in the programing of instructional reading for adults in the U. S. and Canada. They list all the stations that they sent a questionnaire to and state the stations who currently or previously had programs dealing with adult reading. They concluded that there is a lack of programing for adult reading and that further comments and examination is necessary especially on the part of people in the field of reading.

How much time do adults spend watching television? G. Gerbner and Gross (1976) estimate that about 1/3 of all American adults watch an average of 4 or more hours of television per day. They state that television is different from

all other media. From cradle to grave it penetrates nearly every home in the land. Unlike newspapers and magazines, television does not require literacy. And with virtually unlimited access, television both precedes literacy and increasingly, preempts it. According to David Gauelette (1980) the average American views about 6 hours of television per day and will spend more than 9 years of his life in front of a television set. Nancy Larrick (1980) states that the average American watches 1,200 hours of television but spends only 5 hours reading a book each year.

Jackson-Beech and Jeff Sobal (1979) classified adult television viewers in three categories according to the number of hours they viewed television each day. The classifications were viewers, nonviewers and heavy viewers. Nonviewers watch less than one hour of television each day. Viewers watch one to six hours of television each day and heavy viewers watch more than six hours each day. As a whole, they found that heavy viewers seem to be at home or employed in the labor market. A majority of them did not complete high school and are concentrated at the bottom of the social stratification system. Viewers and nonviewers are quite alike in their occupations except that 5% more nonviewers than viewers are involved in professional or technical work. With regard to membership activities nonviewers are about as active as viewers despite the fact that they have more time available to participate. Nonviewers on the whole are better educated and

about as well integrated and active as average viewers.

Australians are among the heaviest viewers of television in the world. Patricia Edgar (1977) interviewed approximately 300 Australian families who do not own a television set and do not plan to own one. The study showed that the nonviewers had attained a much higher level of education than the average Australian and as a nonviewer they seemed to lead active social lives. Among the reasons they stated for rejecting television were that it prevents active creativity by encouraging passivity and cliche thinking. Television steals time and it encourages conformity and materialism. Participants pointed out that reading was one of the more important things they had time for and they did spend more time reading.

Eugene D. Tate (1977) conducted a research project for the Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry in Canada. He sought to investigate how Canadians use and are affected by television. He found that television viewers spend on the average 23.73 hours a week watching television. Institutionalized viewers spent more time viewing with a weekly average of 30.90 hours. There were individuals who did not participate in the survey (they did not view sufficient amount of television) who tended to watch a weekly average of 16.66 hours. Tate found that as the level of education went up the number of hours spent watching television went down. Similarly, greater amounts of time were spent watching television by persons of lower social economic

levels. On the whole, television viewing was reported to be predominantly a social activity. The more an individual watched television the more they tended to report watching it for enjoyment and excitement.

What does the average American read? As part of the Adult Functional Reading Study, Sharon (1973) indicated that 5,000 randomly selected persons were surveyed about their reading habits. The results indicated reading is an ubiquitous activity of American adults. A substantial portion of the waking hours of many persons is spent reading. Reading is done frequently during daily activities such as working, shopping, attending school, church, traveling, commuting, also recreational or free-time activities. Most reading time is spent on newspapers, magazines, books and job-related matter. Although the average person reads for almost 2 hours on a typical day, people differ greatly in the amount that they read. Persons with high socioeconomic stature tend to read more of all kinds of printed matter than those with low status. About 6% of the readers read for 8 hours or more per day, probably those whose work involves a lot of reading. On the other hand, slightly more than 6% read for less than 5 minutes. These people fall in the lower socioeconomic status.

Yankelovich, Skelly and White, Inc. (1978) conducted a large scale research report for the Book Industry Study Group in which they surveyed over 1,500 persons and found that 94% of the American public age 16 or older read magazines and

newspapers, 30% read at least one book a month, and 55% had read at least one book in the past six months. While 39% never read a book, they do read newspapers and magazines, and many do buy books for others. Of the 6% who read nothing, 28% say they do not like to read. The most popular fiction categories were action and adventure stories, followed by historical fiction and historical romance. The top nonfiction categories were biography and autobiography, followed by cooking and home economics and history.

A Gallup Poll (1978) conducted for the American Library Association similarly found that many Americans are book readers and that fiction is still the most widely read genre.

McEvoy and Vincent (1980) reported on the Yankelovich, Skelly and White survey. They point out that most Americans are readers, more than half of them read books; reading does not substitute for, but rather goes along with, involvement in other activities. A comparison of the leisure activities of readers and nonreaders refutes the assumption that certain activities interfere or compete with available time for reading. Time spent viewing television did not substitute for time spent reading books by readers, but the time spent watching television by nonreaders did exceed viewing time of the reading group. Participation in alternative leisure activities posed no competitive threat to reading. Those people who read books were the most involved of all readers and nonreaders in a wide range of leisure activities and membership in organiza-

tions. Those people who read only magazines and newspapers were more active than those who did not read at all.

McEvoy and Vincent identified three factors that appear to have a regulatory influence on the amount and nature of book reading. First, the presence of basic reading skills. A small segment of the public is "lost" to reading primarily due to an apparent absence of reading skills. Second, finding reading pleasurable. Book readers derive pleasure as well as knowledge from book reading, whereas readers who do not read books most often read for knowledge and do not mention pleasure as a motive. Third, integrating reading with other activities. Moderate to heavy book readers were shown to be able to integrate book reading into an active schedule, refuting the excuse that those who do not read books are too busy to do so. Television and other leisure time activities are not a competitive deterrent to the book reader. According to McEvoy and Vincent the profile of today's reader offers a challenge to the stereotypical image of a withdrawn bookworm, uninvolved in life's activities. The reader, especially the book reader, is an active individual for whom reading is an important source of information and for some a highly pleasurable pastime.

John P. Robinson (1980) points out the changing reading habits of the American public. Newspaper readership has been declining since the 1950s with the sharpest drop occurring in the past decade. Some people attribute this decline in part to television because it has become more adept than print

sources at providing news and other information geared to audience needs and expectations. Young readers are thought to have shared disproportionately in the reading decline, raising questions about their possible lack of ability and interest in reading and about whether this decline is due to the medium of television.

Robinson further reported that the picture of reading habits which emerges from this study suggests that the apparent decline in reading among younger adults is true only for certain kinds of materials. The low level of newspaper reading among younger adults is a new phenomenon and not simply a continuation of prior patterns. The outlook is more promising for reading books and magazines. The last decade has witnessed a slight increase in frequency of reading, not only for books and magazines, but for other print matter such as pamphlets and newsletters. However, the increases in book and magazine reading times were not sufficient to offset the decline in newspaper reading. On this basis, reading now appears to be a less prominent feature of people's daily lives.

Teachers are reading models and therefore they must be aware of their own reading habits. Gerald H. Maring (1976) states that teachers, as professionals in the field of reading, are cognizant that reading and the teaching of reading are not simply matters of our being easily accountable technicians who train our pupils to bark words correctly and to achieve high scores on measures of literal comprehension. There is the

aspect of creative reading or the impact of reading on personal growth as related to social development. This type of reading is achieved by being an avid reader.

The first step in developing interest is reading in children is for the teacher to love to read (Walter Barbe, 1963). Eugene H. Cramer and Camille Blachowicz (1980) state that it is the belief of most reading teachers that teachers who are avid readers are likely to have a positive influence on the reading habits of their students. And teachers who are reluctant readers are not likely to lead students to a lifelong love of reading. Norine Odland and Theresa Ilstrip (1963) reported on a survey of the reading habits of prospective elementary teachers and found many to possess an interest in reading. There were also individuals who read very little, causing concern as to whether or not these individuals would be capable of guiding children to develop sensitivity and selectivity when they did not.

Another concern in the area of teachers reading is reading for professional development. What do teachers read for professional development? Hughes and Johnson-Doyle (1978) reported on the professional reading habits of 373 public school teachers on the Maritime provinces of Canada. They wanted to know the extent to which teachers used journals for professional development and the emphasis teachers would like to find in their professional journals. While 19% of the teachers reported that they regularly read 5 or more profes-

sional or general interest publications, 13% indicated that they did not read periodicals. The survey data revealed that teachers as a professional group are not subscribers to professional publications. If teachers are to be good reading models for their students, they should include professional material as part of their reading habits. If "teachers make the difference", they must be knowledgeable about their profession.

Gentile and McMillan (1977) reported research results that indicated that not only are students and their parents having difficulty reading, but some teachers can't read well either. They administered a standardized reading test to 350 teachers to measure reading skills. All were graduate students whose major responsibility included teaching reading in elementary, intermediate or secondary schools. The results were that 28% scored lower in vocabulary than did one-half of the college freshmen population who served as a basis for establishing the test norms, 49% did less well in comprehension than half of the first year students and 56% read slower and with less understanding. According to Gentile and McMillan, reading weakness can greatly interfere with a teacher's ability to model or interpret appropriate reading behavior. Some possible instructional problems are that a teacher's reading deficit might cause the teacher to feel uncomfortable when reading aloud to students and that if a teacher reads too slowly the students' comprehension can be adversely affected.

Also, because a teacher has not developed a broad vocabulary, it is unlikely that students will profit in areas of language growth. When a teacher does not read widely, students are not apt to be given adequate references for further study. A teacher with reading weaknesses is unable to read critically and with a high level of comprehension, thus students' thinking may not be challenged. If the teacher does not appear to be a successful reader, students might not envision the possibility of overcoming their own reading difficulties.

Belkin (1972) summarized the teacher's influence with respect to students' learning. He stated that students learn to think and reason by observing the thinking and reasoning processes of the teacher. The student learns facts by remembering what the teacher says and consulting sources that the teacher alludes to. He learns to see fault in his own thinking by heeding the more learned criticisms of the teacher. The teacher shapes minds and molds characters. The teacher does so by setting himself as an example.

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